

Comments for DOER/Manomet hearing Holyoke MA 7-28-10  
By Derrick Mason, Moss Hill Tree Farm, Russell MA

Thank you for the opportunity to make a couple of brief comments.

My name is Derrick Mason. My family has been tree farming here in western Mass. since the mid 1950's. My dad was a forester and served on the Governor's Forestry Council many years ago when there was such a thing, and when DCR had a different name.

With all due respect, in reading the Manomet study I am struck by several issues. Just a couple of them are worth mentioning here.

First, the dollars and cents of biomass in your model don't add up. Biomass harvesting will never be a threat to our forests, for purely economic reasons. The prices you are modeling -- a couple of dollars a ton, or even \$20 per ton, will restrict the biomass supply almost entirely to waste wood and the discarded by-products of other harvests. Nobody in their right mind would sell even the lowest-grade of firewood for biomass, it would be like selling your good car for scrap. Here's an anecdote: I happen to have a hundred cords of tree-length firewood on my log landing right now, salvage from one wind storm. I will get \$50 a cord for it from the logger. At least another hundred tons of waste tops etc. will be left out there to rot in the woods, and over the next ten years it will decompose to release carbon dioxide and methane. I would happily donate the bulk of this waste to a local biomass plant, if it could supply my family and my community with renewable electricity. You should be focusing your modeling on the waste wood supply, and the economics, and the carbon cycle, and the greenhouse gas effects of waste wood, and not claiming that biomass can ever have any significant negative impact on our primary wood supply or our forest resource.

Second, how can you reasonably equate the carbon cycle of biomass with the carbon cycle of fossil fuels? Fossil fuels have a carbon cycle of millions of years, not decades. Fossil fuels should be treated as million-year-old treasures, which we should use only when no other renewable resources are available or appropriate to the specific and strategic needs of our nation and our state. Once fossil fuels are used up as fuels, we can never dream of getting them back. Biomass is renewable and its carbon cycle is very short, a blink of an eye, in comparison. And aside from the carbon cycle and greenhouse gas advantages of biomass, its production, handling and use are cleaner, safer, more localized, easier to manage and regulate. Please, let's get our values straight, and let's get our modeling rational.

Third, I live in a well-known little town called Russell. We have a big financial and economic crisis on our hands. How do I know this? I serve on the Finance Committee. We had to close our elementary school this year, because of economics. Many people are selling their homes in my town. Why? Because they can't afford the highest property taxes in the state. My town desperately needs industry, and it needs a biomass plant, like some people need an organ transplant. Massachusetts needs renewable energy, like an organ transplant. Don't use flawed modeling, and politically-driven regulations, to deny us the renewable electric generating plant that we ALL need.

I know that many, many forest landowners, tree farmers, foresters, academics and scientists have objections to elements of the selective data and modeling used in this study, not to mention the slanted conclusions and media spin that the public has been getting. Regardless of your politics or agenda, to jump ahead with writing new regulations on this basis would be a travesty of science, a travesty of stewardship, and a travesty of service to the Commonwealth.

Thanks for your attention,  
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